

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2202

March 18, 2006

Citizens' Health Care Working Group
7201 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 575
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Friends:

I would like to take a moment to thank you all for participating in this vitally important event. The Citizens' Health Care Working Group is fulfilling a critical need by initiating a national dialogue on today's most significant health care issues, including health care costs, quality of care, and local strategies regarding the uninsured. This is the thirteenth community meeting that the Working Group has held this year, and several more are planned across the country. After listening to this input, the Working Group will report the results of these meetings in an official submission to Congress.

This national discussion on health care is urgent. Today, there are 46 million uninsured Americans, health care costs continue to rise, workers are being asked to share more of the burden of their medical expenses, and the Baby Boomer generation is aging and placing greater demand on health services.

People in Michigan also understand the role that a strong economy has in keeping health care accessible and affordable. For the past few years, our state has experienced a slow economy and we have lost thousands of jobs, including good-paying manufacturing jobs with good health benefits. The result is that many people in Michigan are either paying more for health care or losing health care coverage altogether.

With so many serious issues and so much at stake, we must find constructive and innovative health care solutions for our communities. That is why your work today is so critical. Health care should be a right, not a privilege, and, together, we can meet this great challenge.

Again, thank you for attending today's meeting of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group. I look forward to reviewing your recommendations in the report to Congress.

Sincerely,



Carl Levin